THE FACTORS MOTIVATING STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SZCZECIN TO TAKE UP PROFESSIONAL WORK

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Purpose: The article aims to examine the expectations of students of the University of Szczecin in relation to the labor market. Factors motivating students to work professionally have been a topic repeatedly discussed by scientists in various years, hence the author's thesis in her study: "due to significant socio-economic changes in the environment, students need more care and help from their superiors to motivate themselves to take up professional work".

Design/methodology/approach: The author conducted research in the form of an unstructured interview, allowing randomly selected full-time students of the University of Szczecin to answer the question "What encourages you to take up professional career?"

Findings: The research results can be used to help prepare motivational systems in enterprises employing young people and also direct attention to the health, psychological and emotional problems of the young generation, which have intensified after the difficult times of the pandemic.

Research limitations/implications: The author conducted a research sample by analyzing the responses of 145 students. Students' statements may constitute a contribution to further, more developed research.

Practical implications: The research results can help employers understand the young generation and indicate what tools they should use to mobilize young people for a given employer and, in the long run, keep them in the company for a longer period of time.

Originality/value: The article describes issues that have been previously discussed by many authors, but the ability of respondents to express themselves freely shows the great diversity of young people's expectations towards the labor market, which may help employers and lecturers understand the young generation better. Knowing the problems and expectations of students in relation to their professional work can help managers adopt an appropriate attitude towards young people to facilitate their entry into the world of adulthood.

Keywords: motivation factors, expectations regarding the labor market, generation Z.

Category of the paper: Research work based on casual interviews.

1. Introduction

The article presents the problems and expectations of young people on the labor market. Generation Z cares about their physical and mental well-being. Students, especially of management – related fields, are employees who are aware of their rights, know the latest global trends related to management in enterprises and often have already had their first professional experience. Young people are very aware of what they can and should expect from employers, and their expectations often influence the need to change the management's approach to employees in companies, e.g. in terms of work organization or motivation system. After the pandemic, young people are indifferent and discouraged from taking up professional activities, they expect more remote work, greater care and support from management and lecturers. The article purpose is to examine the expectations of students of the University of Szczecin in relation to the labor market. Author put forward the following research hypothesis: "due to significant socio-economic changes in the environment, students need more care and help from their superiors to motivate themselves to take up professional work". The study was conducted due to the changes observed by the author in students' approach to learning and work after the pandemic.

In addition to the psychological, health and social effects, the pandemic has hindered or limited the implementation of apprenticeships and internships for young people, which constitutes a barrier to professional development and causes young people to have deficits in practical skills (Wpływ …, 2021). All the above-mentioned factors make it difficult for students to motivate themselves both to study and gain professional experience. After the pandemic, as a new phenomenon, there was an increase in interest in the researched topic.

The structure of the article includes an introduction, three theoretical chapters regarding: the characteristics of a student as a representative of Generation Z, his attitude towards taking up z professional job and the characteristics of the factors motivating him to take up a work, as well as a research chapter in which the author presents the results in interviews with students regarding their expectations on relation to develop their professional careers. The article ends with conclusions.

2. Students as a representative of Generation Z

Current students are classifies as Generation Z, i.e. people born after 1996. Important is that for young people entering the labor market is salary, flexible working time, and a pleasant atmosphere at the workplace (Konkel, 2023). K. Komorowska in the Young Poles on the labor market reports shows that what is important for young people is high earnings, benefits offered

by the employer, gaining experience, sense of meaning and flexibility, passion at work, compliance of one's own beliefs with company values, mental and social well-being, flexible working hours, contact with the employer via social media (Komorowska, 2022). The young, creative and self-confident generation grew up in a period of dynamic technological growth. University graduates are mobile, flexible, well-educated and have high self-esteem. They form a group of demanding employees with excessive expectations from work (Wojciechowska, 2012). In his research, J. Gajda points out the values shared by Generation Z: good health, resourcefulness in life, life without material problems and developing one's own passions, as well as career development and professional work, and to a slightly lesser extent friendship, love and family happiness, and then education. The professional expectations indicated in the study concern, among others: flexibility, balance in professional and personal life, access to modern technologies, high salary, freedom of action, friendly and relaxed atmosphere at work, possibility of implementing frequent changes, possibility of remote work, work on a temporary contract, partnership approach, the possibility of being asked to solve ambitious tasks independently (Gajda, 2017).

3. Students' attitude towards professional work

Students choose a specific field of study for various reasons, most often they already have interests, passions, and in many cases the desire to work in a specific profession, but also the desire to establish social relationships or the need to broaden one's thinking horizons (Sławecki, Wach-Kąkolewicz, 2012). A. Suchorab pointed to the students' belief that completing studies will provide them not only with higher education, but also with finding a well-paid, permanent and secure job (Suchorab, 2014). Part-time students usually undertake studies in order to further their education in order to obtain a promotion, support their own career, obtain international certificates, deepen their academic knowledge and practical skills, carry out professional training and prepare for a change of job (Kust, 2016). Some full-time students start working in their free time during their studies and focus on self-improvement, but this is not a large percentage of students. A small number of students decide to participate in scientific clubs, where, among other things, they have the opportunity to establish professional contacts, meet future employers, or participate in workshops and training. In E. Poniatowska's research, a small number of students indicated the desire to avoid systematic professional work as the reason for studying (Poniatowska, 2020). According to W. Jarecki and R. Rudnik, one third of the students they surveyed took up freelance work, and there were also jobs for a fixed and indefinite period. The majority of students undertook physical work, to a lesser extent as lower-level specialists, and were encouraged to take up work by gaining financial independence,

difficult financial situation and opportunities for professional development (Jarecki, Rudnik, 2015).

Table 1.
Stakeholder motivational factors for participation in Work-Integrated Learning

Employer	- new/improved collaboration with HEI, - contribution to economic development.	- company promotion, - mutual collaboration/ introduction.		- connection between theory and practice, - development of student practical knowledge and skills, - student career development (preparation for future jobs), - increasing quality of teaching and learning.
Student	- new experience and work habits.		- increasing student motivation.	
Teacher	- increasing teacher knowledge and skills.			

Source: Pažur Aničić, Divjak, 2022, pp. 56-58.

Universities' for their part, are trying to increase students' readiness to take up work, among other things, through work-integrated learning (table 1) (Pažur Aničić, Divjak, 2022).

4. Factors motivating and demotivating students to take up professional work

Many factors influence students motivation, including: higher academic well-being, persistence, achievement, relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Their motivation is also relevant for the quality of their learning experience. The authors also include in their model: teacher and parental autonomy support (Bureau, Howard, Chong, Guay, 2022). M. Mansour and A. J. Martin indicate paternal and home factors like: home resources, in- and out-of-home parental assistance, parenting style and parental involvement in the school, as important for student motivation and engagement (Mansour, Martin, 2009). The five key ingredients impacting student motivation are (Williams, K.C., Williams, C.C., 2011):

- student - intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, various individual and social factors, hierarchy of needs, perceived well-being, efficient use of energy and focus, purposeful connection with work, conscientiousness and achievement, public speaking competence, study time and study habits, lecture attendance, comprehensive, long-range educational plan,
- teacher - subject knowledge and motivational level, teacher skills, teacher qualifications, test giving, scientific management and human relations, conscious of small details, reach out to students, know your students and build on their strengths, value and build relationship, relational turning points, enthusiasm,

- content - students experience success and achievement, student ownership, student choices, build competency, creativity and critical thinking, students feel connected, novelty, timely and relevant to real life, variety, technology and information from the Internet such as websites, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and phone apps,
- method/process – incentives, experiential learning or self-learning, mutual goals or objectives, verbal conformity, flexible and stimulating just-in-time training and interactivity, different types of framing, objective criteria, encouragement and praise, casework, guided discussion, reinforcement strategies, positive social interactions, storytelling, enhanced lecture, collaborative quiz,
- environment - create an effective environment, individual and learning system design differences, include the study of self-information, empowerment, engagement and considering student and teacher opinions, teamwork, structures, distance and online learning, emotionally literate environment.

According to the data of the Polish Labor Market 2023 report, surveyed employees belonging to Generation Z changed employment in 2021 in 80% (Polski rynek pracy…, 2023), which proves a very high job turnover among young people. According to A. Chomicka, M. Cież and M. Dankiewicz, frequent job changes are caused not so much by lack of loyalty to the company, but by the lack of attractiveness of the activities performed, which in turn is caused by being constantly online on the Internet (Chomicka, Cież, Dankiewicz, 2022). R. Muster presents employer research in which he lists the strengths and weaknesses of the young generation. The strengths of Generation Z include: willingness to learn and readiness to acquire new qualifications, knowledge of modern technologies, openness, aggressiveness, good education, awareness of one's value, willingness to take up new challenges, fantasy and ingenuity. The weaknesses include: demandingness, consumerism, lack of loyalty and attachment to the company, belief in one's comprehensive knowledge and wisdom, lack of enthusiasm for work and verve, lack of responsibility, limiting oneself only to specific professional duties (Muster, 2020). M. Świerkosz-Hołysz notes that young people (Generation Z) differ significantly from previous generations. These differences are caused primarily by living mostly in the virtual world, constantly connected to the Internet and fascination with social media, and thus the loss of the ability to communicate with the older generation, and often with each other. In her research, the author presents fragments of interviews with managers from various industries, who clearly point to problems with high turnover of young people in workplaces, high financial expectations, little professional experience and the desire to receive additional bonuses such as cinema or gym passes. There is also a reluctance to work on days off and an unwillingness to accept constructive criticism (Świerkosz-Hołysz, 2016).

J. Fratričová and Z. Kirchmayer include the following negative motivation factors (barriers) among young people (Fratričová, Kirchmayer, 2018): lack of enjoy from work, problems with co-workers and leaders, workload, lack of sense of purpose, low paid, no interest in work, unfair

pay, monotonous work, physical work conditions, conflicts, career stagnation, lack of recognition and private problems.

M.A. Lesniewski and J. Berna, have divided motivators into wage and non-wage. Wage motivators (financial) according to M. Kazuś and M.T. Fierek are remuneration and all its components and monetary benefits constituting income from work: wages, various types of bonuses, motivators for production or sellers, awards (Kazus, Fierek, 2019). Non-wage motivational factors may also be of a material or non-material nature (Leśniewski, Berny, 2011). In her study, D. Rogowska compares intangible and material non-wage motivators according to the classification of P. Lenik and A. Pietryk. Intangible motivators include, among others: the possibility of professional development, delegation of employee rights, words of recognition and respect from the management staff, flexible working hours, while material motivators include: medical care paid for by the company, additional health and pension insurance, co-financing for the employee's education or training children, participation in training, conferences, seminars, use of a company car, covering the costs of company trips, reimbursement of the employee's commuting costs, providing a place to park the employee's car in a guarded parking lot, financing subscriptions to prestigious magazines, ensuring comfortable working conditions, providing the employee with his own office with equipment, purchase of office supplies at the expense of the company, purchase of company products on favorable terms for the employee, loans and financial assistance from the company, bonds or shares of the company, co-financing of meals at work, facilities related to the use of credit and discount cards, shopping vouchers and tickets for cultural events, organization of corporate events, telephone calls at company's expense, use of sports and recreation facilities at the company's expense, additional paid leaves, coverage of the costs of employee clothing, protective measures in the event of de-recruitment of an employee from a given job position (Rogowska, 2020).

Motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to engagement in behavior that is inherently satisfying or enjoyable and extrinsic motivation refers to performance of behavior that is fundamentally contingent upon the attainment of an outcome that is separable from the action itself (Legault, 2016).

5. 5. Students' expectations in relation to their professional career

5.1. The research methodology

The purpose of the article is to examine the expectations of students of the University of Szczecin in relation to the labor market. Factors motivating students to work professionally have been a topic repeatedly discussed by scientists in various years, hence the author's thesis

in her study: "due to significant socio-economic changes in the environment, students need more care and help from their superiors to motivate themselves to take up professional work". After analyzing previous research by scientists from various universities, the author of the article examined 145 students of various fields of study at the University of Szczecin. In the study, A. Nerć-Pełka conducted an unstructured interview with one question "What encourages you to take up professional career?", giving the respondents complete freedom of expression. Respondents could respond in writing according to their beliefs and often provided several factors. For the sake of freedom of expression, the author grouped similar phases together. In next step in research author divided the grouped answers into two types of factors (material and non-material) motivating. The study may be an introduction to broader research among learners entering adult life.

5.2. Analysis of research results

The author included among the financial factors: remuneration, raises, awards, remuneration for holiday leave and, in one group, financial bonuses, paid overtime and commissions (Fig. 1). A high salary has always been expected by employees, it is the basis for ensuring the most basic needs first and the employee's main source of income. Half of the respondents indicated their willingness to receive other financial benefits for work (without specifying which ones), which is why the author included allowances for overtime and commissions in this group.
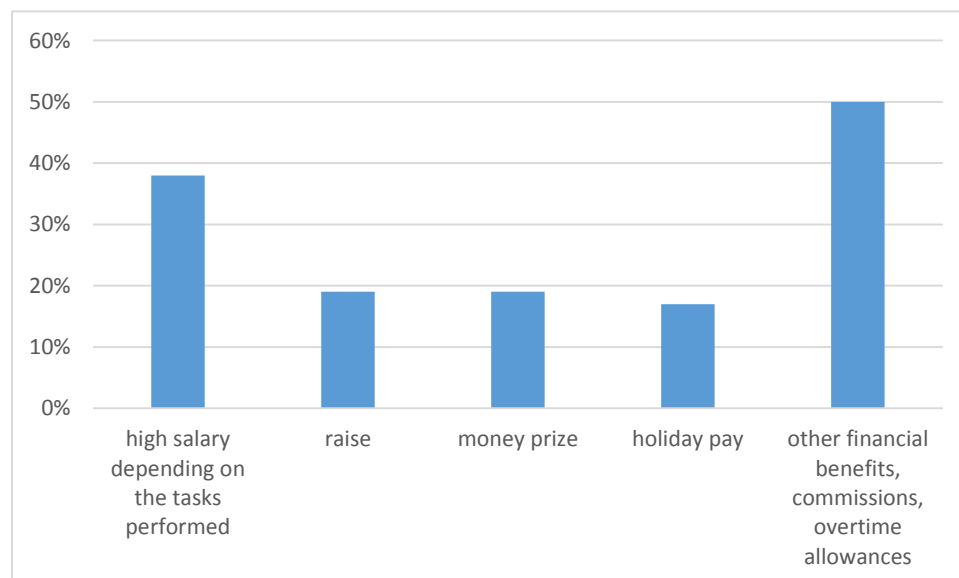

Figure 1. Financial motivators.

Source: Own elaboration.

The next group are non-wage motivators. In her research among students (Fig. 2), A. Nerć-Pełka notes that most people indicated remote work (41% of respondents), sports cards (35% of respondents), small gifts from the manager, including SPA vouchers, gift cards, culture cinema or concert tickets (32% of respondents), company financing of courses and training

(31%), the possibility of promotion (31%). 30% of respondents want to gain recognition from their superior. Less than a quarter of respondents expect a friendly atmosphere at work, working in an environment showing respect and trust, expect to receive medical, insurance and social packages, receive additional days or hour off if they need it, declare their willingness to acquire new knowledge, skills and take up new challenges, expect the opportunity to lead a balanced life private and professional, would like to receive free meals at work and participate in company events. About 10% of students indicated the need to participate in wellness programs, receive free drinks at work (coffee, tea, juices), receive a company car, or office equipment, including a computer, mobile phone with headphones, speakers, smartwatches, and new technologies.
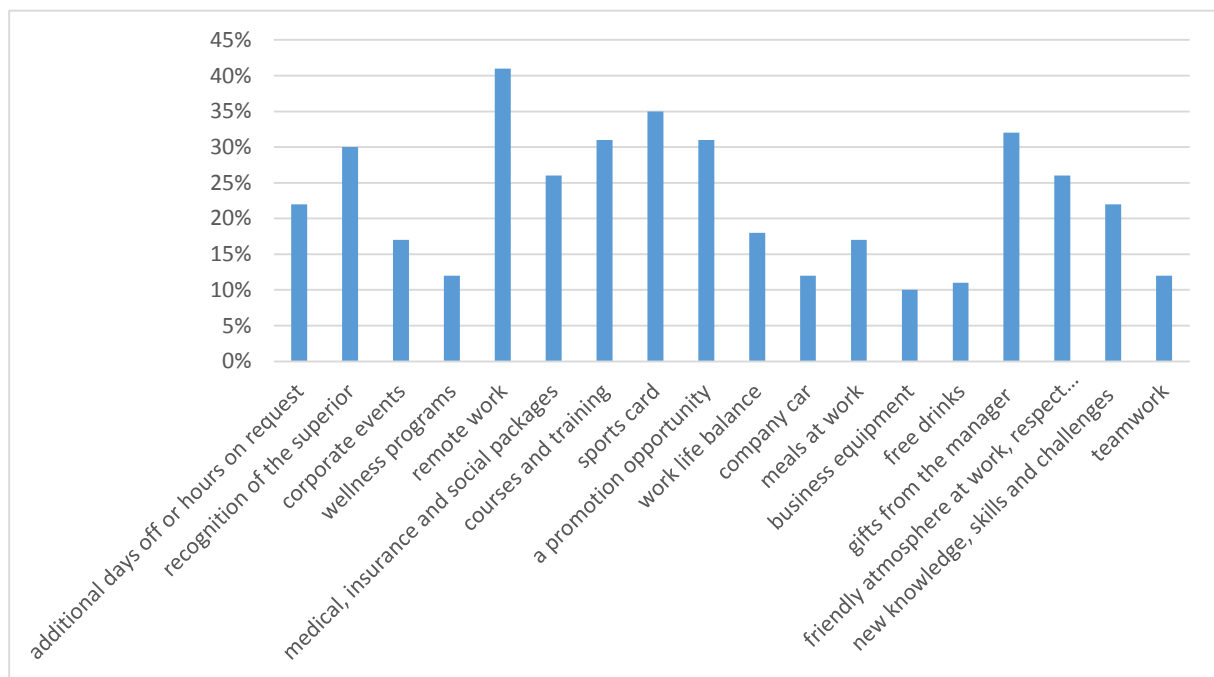

Figure 2. Non-financial motivators

Source: Own elaboration.

Additionally respondents included (less than 10%):

− providing a parking space,

− opportunity to participate in conferences,

− extension of rights at work and greater responsibility associated with it,

− better management in the enterprise, including fair division of responsibilities and better tasks planning,

− the need for job security and stability,

− possibility of business trips,

− opportunity to talk to a psychologist, participate in mindfulness or mental program,

− the need to receive feedback from management,

− the need to distinguish the best employee, e.g. on an information board,

- four-day working week,
- the need to cover car fuel costs,
- the need to have own office,
- willingness to buy company shares,
- possibility of reducing prices for employees on often branded product,
- participation in management meetings,
- possibility of grating a loan for e. g. training with a reduced interests rate and providing credit cards,
- the need for job satisfaction,
- good working conditions, including breaks and rest areas,
- restaurants discounts,
- Christmas packages for children,
- own development budget,
- possibility of employment for short period of time, e.g. for a month,
- possibility of taking pets to work,
- need for child care,
- access to games at work, e.g. playstation,
- possibility of better contact with superiors,
- covering the costs of public transport,
- meeting with employees after work,
- self-fulfillment and creativity,
- introduction period to work,
- health days,
- mentoring programs.

Individual votes indicated willingness to use the company blog, prestige, politeness of management, reasonable approach, casual dress days, company swag, celebrating birthdays and anniversaries at work, volunteering, the possibility for employees to take product samples, loyalty programs, global experience programs, employee assistant programs, happy hour, half day Friday, contributory pension plans or 401(k) programs, compressed workweeks, tuition reimbursement for further education, family-friendly policies and parental leave, diversity and inclusion initiatives, opportunity to work on projects.

5.3. Discussion

Students have many different expectations towards their professional work. Most of them are consistent with previous research by other authors (e. g. the need for high salaries or desire to receive various benefits), but there are also voices indicating the need to guide and take care of a young employee (mentoring, better contact with superiors, opportunities to talk to a psychologist, mental programs, friendly atmosphere at work, small gifts from manager as

recognition at work etc.), which proves that young people are still very uncertain. There are few, but very mature, statements in the study, which show that there are students at a young age who aspire to lead teams of people and are not afraid of taking responsibility for the assigned tasks.

G. Wronowska states that working during studies largely verifies expectations regarding future employment and acquired competencies. Students have the opportunity to become familiar with the requirements and conditions of the labor market, which reduces their initial expectations. Students who have never worked professionally during their studies build their idea of work based on their willingness, desires and existing stereotypes (Wronowska, 2015). Young people expect support from the university in the form of career and sometimes life advice, as well as help from the teaching staff in implementing not only scientific but also other issues. The lecturer is to be a mentor for them, supporting the educational process and the process of shaping their professional path (Adamska, 2018). Lecturers can also help by selecting tasks during classes that will be useful in their future professional work. Awareness of the goal that the student will achieve through learning also motivates the student and mobilizes him to continue acquiring knowledge (Porzucek-Miśkiewicz, Wawrzyniak, 2018).

We should also remember about the changes that are takin place dynamically in the labor market. The trends identified in practice include a reduction in the number of job offers, a reduction in employee layoffs and a reduction in voluntary resignations from work, the ubiquitous use of artificial intelligence with automation in the recruitment process, employers' focus on skills rather than education, more flexible work organization through hybrid work, a reduction in the number of full-time employees jobs in favor of temporary and short-term work, which is related to economic uncertainty (Marszycki, 2024), focusing on multi-generational teams, takin into account DE&I (diversity, equal opportunities and inclusion) issues (Rynek pracy…, 2024). Employer branding and the development of soft skills by managers – leaders will also be important so that they can build employee commitment. It is also expected to increase the recruitment of workers from the Far East, Vietnam and the Philippines for simple industrial work (Główne trendy…, 2024). With such expected changes in the labor market, employers should verify their motivation systems and introduce more tools providing care and psychological support for young employees, make older and more experienced colleagues aware of the needs of Generation Z. It would also be worth introducing conversations with young employees allowing for planning their careers in the long term, so that young people see meaning in the activities they perform and have a specific goal in life. Managers should be not only leaders, but above all, coaches and mentors for their employees.

6. Conclusions

In the article, the author presented the results of unstructured interviews with a small number of students, therefore the conclusions cannot be generalized to the entire population. The study was carried out mainly during and after the pandemic, hence a limited number of respondents were examined, therefore the study can be treated as a pilot study, but it may constitute the basis for future, broader research related to the motivation of young people to work. The topic of motivation for young people to work is still relevant, especially in the light of the turbulent changes taking place in the environment. In the students' responses, the author drew attention to the need to support students in the process of not only education, but also their introduction to professional life, both by organizing internships and traineeships in enterprises, but also by organizing coaching and mentoring programs for young people. The author confirms the hypotheses put forward in the research.

Acknowledgements

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